

DILATING INSTRUCTIONS

We recommend Soul Source dilators. You will have been told to purchase these dilators prior to surgery. Possible sizes include P1, P2, #1, #2, #3 and #4. Prior to surgery you will order either a medium or large set consisting of either #1-3 or #2-4.

Vaginal dilation will typically begin one week after surgery. Specific instructions will be given by your TRS team.

Why do we dilate?

To keep the depth and width of the vagina. After surgery, the tissue wants to return to its original position. The vagina is prone to narrowing. Dilation starts after the vaginal packing is removed. This will allow for maintaining as much depth and width as possible.

First post-operative appointment

1. You will be provided with a set of 3 Soul Source dilators to take home with you. They come in graduated sizes. You will start with the narrowest (smallest) dilator first.
2. The vaginal packing and catheter will be removed and the physiotherapist will teach you how to self-dilate. Keep these instructions as a reference
3. The dilators have white dots along the side that should be facing up upon insertion. During initial dilation, we see how many dots are visible from the outside once you have inserted the dilator as far as it will go. Once home, you will aim to insert the dilator at least as far as you were able to the first time.

To prepare for dilation

1. Wash your hands, clean your dilators with antimicrobial soap, and rinse them thoroughly with running water.
2. Get into bed with a blue disposable pad or towel under your buttocks.
3. Dilation is usually performed lying on our back with knees bent and legs open. We recommend raising your upper body by no more than 15 degrees. You can experiment with placing a pillow under your knees, having one leg turned out instead of both or lying in an empty bathtub with cushions.
4. Practice releasing your pelvic muscles through breath and relaxation like the physiotherapist showed you.

Dilations Steps

- You will be using the smallest dilator for the first one week of dilation
1. Begin with the smallest dilator you have, hold the dilator by the base with the tip and the white dots facing upwards.
 2. Apply about 1 tablespoon of water based lubricant to the tip of the dilators, cover the entire dilator to the depth expected, except for the end you will be holding, with a thin layer of the lubricant.
 3. Apply a small "hershy kiss" size (teaspoon size) dollop of **MetroGel** to the dilator.
 4. Use a mirror to help you find the vaginal opening.
 5. Gently insert the dilator with the white dots facing up, try to avoid putting pressure on the lower part of the vaginal opening while you are inserting the dilator.
 6. Insert the first portion of the dilators (about 5cm) slightly tilted at a downward angle (about the angle of the thighs).

7. Lower the angle to make the tip directed upward towards the belly button and continue to insert. Note the number of dots you can see outside the vagina opening. Continue to gently insert until you get to at least the same number of dots you did the first time in clinic. You may be able to insert the dilator further than the first time as your muscles are more relaxed. This is fine as long as you are not experiencing any pain.
8. Once the end of the vagina has been reached, apply light and constant pressure but do not push further. When swelling decreases, you might not be able to reach the same depth as shown with the dots by up to about half a dot. This is not because you have lost depth but because the labia are not sticking out as much.
9. To avoid injury, do not apply any excess pressure
10. Allow the dilator to remain in place for the time suggested on your schedule.
11. When inserting and rotating the first dilator becomes easy, progress to the next size. You can typically progress to next size in dilator if you can dilate comfortably for 7-10 consecutive days with the current dilator size.
12. If you are working on increasing dilator size, after 15 minutes with the smallest dilator in order to maintain depth, change it for a larger one. Put lubricant on the larger dilator. At first you will not be able to insert the larger dilator as far as the smaller one. Start with inserting the larger dilator as far as comfortable for 5 minutes after the 15 minutes with the smallest.
13. Continue to initiate dilation with your smallest dilator, followed by dilating with the next size up. When you have achieved full depth with the next size up, you can work towards introducing the third size. As you continue to dilate, in order to maintain depth, always start with the smallest dilator, followed by the next sizes. You can dilate with a combination of the different sizes. You should spend a total of 15 minutes with the largest dilator. (Example: 5 minutes small, 5 minutes medium, 15 minutes large all at full depth).

After dilating

1. Gently clean the lubricant from your vulva with a moist hand cloth or wet wipe.
2. Wash your hands well.
3. Clean your dilators with antimicrobial dish soap and rinse thoroughly with running water.
4. Dry the dilators and store them in their case.

Tips

1. During the first few weeks of dilation, it can be normal to see some blood, drainage and even pieces of stitches on your dilator as well as spotting on your pad.
2. Your pelvic floor muscles may be tight, this can give us a feeling of resistance upon inserting the dilator. Try to breath and relax. Practice the pelvic floor drops and breathing techniques the physiotherapist did with you.
3. Having full bowels or gas can cause discomfort with dilation. If you have the urge, try to have a bowel movement prior to dilating.
4. Urinate after dilating in order to reduce the chance of a urinary tract infection.

Dilation Schedule

First Week after Packing/Stent removed		
Shower and have water fall indirectly over your vulva. Dilate with the smallest dilator for the first week		
Morning Dilation x15 minutes	Afternoon Dilation x 15 minutes	Evening Dilation x 15 minutes
First month (next 3 weeks)		
Morning Dilation x15 minutes with large	Afternoon Dilation x 15 minutes with large	Evening Dilation x 15 minutes with large
Dilation: start with dilator to maintain depth. Gradually increase in size. Keep largest dilator in for at least 15 minutes. Example: start with smallest dilator for 5 minutes then medium size for 15 minutes. If wound separation, still dilate at same frequency but do not try to move up in dilator size. Maintaining depth is the priority. Width/girth can be increased and regained later. Once separation closes, gradually move up in dilator size again. Use sensitive skin soap and hand to gently wash vulva.		
Month 2-3		
Morning Dilation x 15 minutes	Afternoon Dilation x 15 minutes	Evening Dilation x 15 minutes
<p>Dilations: Attempt to use your largest dilator unless otherwise advised by the surgeon.</p> <p>8 weeks after surgery you can now start going about your daily activities, gradually resume physical activities and sports. No lifting greater than 15lbs, no pushing or pulling before this time.</p> <p>You may begin to explore the region of your clitoris with your fingers. Remember, the region above your clitoris may also be an area of a lot of erogenous sensation. You can begin massaging your incisions and doing scar maintenance. Ensure you have had a follow up with your hormone prescriber to ensure that the prescription is adjusted.</p>		
Month 4 (12 weeks after surgery)		
Morning Dilation x 15 minutes	Evening Dilation x 15 minutes	
<p>Dilations: Should be using the largest dilator now with less difficulty.</p> <p>If your wounds are completely healed can now swim in a pool, hot tub or lake.</p> <p>After it has been three months since surgery, can start engaging in different types of sex including vaginal, finger and/or anal penetration and oral sex.</p>		
Month 5-9		
Morning Dilation x 15 minutes	Evening Dilation x 15 minutes	
You can start swimming and taking baths. You can start re-introducing other activities such as cycling and horseback riding.		
Month 9-12		
Dilate once daily at a time of your choice		
After 12 months		
Dilate once a week at a time of your choice. If discomfort or loss of depth, increase frequency until dilation is easier. Penetrative sex is helpful but does not replace the need for dilations. Continue to have annual checkups with your family care provider. Have a vaginal exam every year to check in on its wellbeing.		